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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000258

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ORPHANED RADIOLOGICAL SOURCES IN ARMENIA: SEARCH  
AND SECURE PROGRAM UNDERWAY

REF: A) STATE 5839 B) YEREVAN 76 C) 05 YEREVAN 1907

1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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SUMMARY  
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2. (SBU) Armenian nuclear regulatory authorities are preparing to ship two high-intensity, orphaned radiological sources to Russia for secure storage. According to the director of the quasi-governmental Armenian agency responsible for safeguarding the materials, IAEA will oversee the transfer, which will be funded by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Seeking to expand the scope of future U.S.-Armenian collaboration in similar search and secure projects, the GOAM has designated a lead point of contact for U.S. collaborators and, at our request, submitted a letter of support to IAEA Director General Mohammed El-Baradei for the IAEA Supplementary Guidance on the Import and Export of Radiological Materials. A dipnote dated February 13 and received February 17 (para 5), confirmed Oskanian delivered the letter (para 6) and reiterated the GOAM's request for financial and technical assistance to secure abandoned radiological sources (ref C). End Summary.

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GOAM POINT OF CONTACT READY TO COLLABORATE WITH DOE AND NRC  
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3. (SBU) The GOAM point of contact for the U.S. Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration Global Search and Secure Project is Armenian Nuclear and Radiation Safety Center Director Armen Amirjanyan. (Note: Amirjanyan, who speaks limited English, may be reached by phone at (374-10) 54-39-92, by fax at (374-10) 54-39-97, and by email at a.amirjanyan@anra.am. End Note). On February 22, Amirjanyan told us he had received a formal offer of assistance in the form of a February 18 letter from Department of Energy National Nuclear Security Administration Global Search and Secure Program Manager Richard W. Meehan. Amirjanyan said he would review the offer with Armenian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (ANRA) Head Ashot Martirosyan, coordinate with "relevant government authorities," and respond "as soon as possible."

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ARMENIA'S SEARCH AND SECURE PROGRAM ALREADY UNDERWAY  
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4. (SBU) Under the auspices of the IAEA and with the financial assistance of the U.S. Department of Energy, the GOAM currently plans to ship two orphaned radiological sources to Russia for safekeeping, according to the Executive Director of the quasi-governmental Research Center for the Problem of Nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (NPC) Karen Gasparyan. NPC works with Armenian nuclear regulators, including ANRA and the Armenian Nuclear and Radiation Safety Center, to search for and secure orphaned radiological sources. "A trilateral Armenia-IAEA-DOE effort" according to Gasparyan, authorities identified one source after a shepherd, who used a partially buried container as a seat in the forest where he grazed cows, sought medical attention for a series of ailments doctors tracked to radiation poisoning. Authorities confiscated the second source, components from oncological equipment, when the government privatized a local Yerevan hospital. Gasparyan told us the NPC is currently working from a Soviet era list of "hundreds" of sites to track down abandoned radiological equipment used for industrial, health care, education, and research applications.

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TEXT OF ARMENIAN DIPLOMATIC NOTE  
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5. (SBU) The English-language text of the diplomatic note follows. Begin text:

No. 13/01793

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia presents its compliments to the Embassy of the United States of America in Armenia and in response to the Note Verbal No. 023/06A, dated 18 January, 2006, has the honor to express appreciation regarding the readiness of the American Government to assist Armenia in its efforts to locate and safely preserve abandoned radioactive sources.

The Republic of Armenia attaches great importance to the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and to its supplementary Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources. H.E. Mr. Vartan Oskanian the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia has delivered a letter of support to the Director General of the IAEA H.E. Dr. Mohammed El-Baradei on this subject. Meanwhile, the Republic of Armenia, since 1999 has already started implementation of the IAEA Model Project and now it is in the stage Milestone 4. Nevertheless, investigation, detection, and systemization of abandoned radioactive sources remains unresolved and any assistance in this domain will be mostly welcome.

Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the United States of America on reduction of threat posed by abandoned radioactive sources will be another successful project in more than 10 years of productive collaboration.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Embassy of the United States of America in Armenia the assurances of its highest consideration.

13 February, 2006, Yerevan

Embassy of United States of America  
Yerevan

End text.

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TEXT OF OSKANIAN LETTER TO EL-BARADEI  
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16. (SBU) The English-language text of Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian's letter to IAEA Director General Mohammed El-Baradei follows. Begin text:

13/01893  
16/02/2006

H.E. Mohammed El-Baradei  
Director General  
International Atomic Energy Agency

Excellency,

I am writing to inform you that the Republic of Armenia adds its support to the Guidance on the Import and Export of Radioactive Sources of the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources. We consider the Guidance a very important addition to the Code of Conduct targeted at the improvement of the safe and secure preservation of radioactive sources.

Let me once again assure you that Armenia attaches great importance to cooperation with the IAEA and hopes that our relations will become ever more effective and efficient.

Please, accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/

Vartan Oskanian  
End Text.  
EVANS